

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed Searchlight Wind Energy Project. Searchlight Wind Energy, LLC (Searchlight Wind) has submitted an application (NVN-084626) for the construction, operation, and maintenance of a wind energy generation site on public land adjacent to the town of Searchlight, Nevada. The first step in the EIS process is public scoping to identify issues and concerns that should be addressed in the EIS. The 60-day public scoping period for the Searchlight Wind Energy Project was initiated on December 16, 2008 and ended February 17, 2009. This newsletter provides information on the scoping process and results, and provides an update on the proposed project and the EIS schedule.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Searchlight Wind is proposing to develop an approximately 370 megawatt (MW) wind energy facility consisting of up to 140 wind turbine generators. Located on 24,383 acres of public land near Searchlight, Nevada (see map on page 3), the facility would have the capacity to generate enough electricity for more than 90,000 households.

The proposed project would also require the construction of new access roads, an overhead transmission line, two electrical substations, an electrical interconnection facility/switchyard, an operations and maintenance building, as well as temporary and permanent areas for construction staging and storage. Five permanent meteorological masts would be installed on the site to measure the wind speed and direction across the site over the life of the project.

Searchlight Wind has applied to the Western Area Power Administration (Western) to interconnect the wind energy project with Western's power transmission system. In response, Western proposes to construct a new switchyard to accommodate the interconnection (NVN-086777), and is participating in the EIS process as a cooperating agency.

PROJECT UPDATES

Meteorological Tower EA

BLM authorized Searchlight Wind (NVN-082648) to install five anemometer towers to collect wind data on July 13, 2007 based on the 2007 project layout. Searchlight Wind has since revised their project area layout in response to public comments. Searchlight Wind has submitted an application to amend this ROW to move one of the existing anemometer towers to conform with the current project layout design in order to collect site specific wind data. An EA is currently being processed by BLM to authorize this action.

Visual Resource Assessment

BLM has begun the process of collecting information on the visual impacts of the proposed project. In order to implement the study, Key Observation Points (KOPs) in and surrounding the project area will be established. KOPs are the locations from which visual impacts are assessed. KOPs are usually established along commonly traveled routes or at other likely observation points. Locating KOPs involves the consideration of factors including project visibility, angle of observation, number of viewers, length of time the project is in view, relative project size, season of use, and light conditions. As part of the visual assessment process, BLM will also be preparing computer-generated simulations of what the proposed project, if authorized and built, might look like from each of the KOPs.

Aerial Mapping

Searchlight Wind, with authorization from BLM (NVN-086694), has mapped the project area from the air using LIDAR surveying methodology to acquire better topographical information. The new maps will show contour intervals of 2-foot intervals versus 40-foot intervals as shown on standard topographical maps. The improved maps will help in the project site layout and assist in the assessment and analysis of resources potentially affected by the proposed project. To view these maps, visit the project website at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/energy.html.



WHERE ARE WE IN THE EIS PROCESS?

The purpose of the first step—project scoping—was to identify questions, issues, and concerns from the public, tribes, and other agencies. The input received during scoping provides direction for developing and conducting the EIS studies. After scoping, the project team initiated data collection efforts for land uses and resources in the project area to better understand the local environment. Information was gathered from existing literature, maps, and records; agency files and databases; and field surveys.

Currently, the project team is evaluating the inventory of resources collected to estimate the direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on the environment that could result from the Searchlight Wind Energy Project. Once potential impacts are identified, resource specialists will develop options to lessen, or mitigate, those impacts.

WHAT WE HEARD DURING SCOPING

Three public scoping meetings were held in January 2009 in Searchlight, Boulder City, and Laughlin, Nevada. The purpose of these meetings was to provide information about the project to the public and to solicit written comments regarding concerns about the project. A total of 113 people attended these meetings, and 66 written comment submissions were received via e-mail, fax, letter, or meeting comment forms.

Following is a summary of the concerns and suggestions that were raised most frequently. A detailed report of what the

project team learned during scoping is available in the Final Scoping Summary Report, available from the BLM or on the project website: http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/energy.html.

Vegetation/Wildlife

Concerns about vegetation/wildlife accounted for 21 percent of issues identified in public scoping comments. Comments specifically expressed concern about special status species such as the desert tortoise, Gila monsters, and Joshua trees; impacts on bird and bat migration and mortality; and effects of the project on desert plants and flowers.

Socioeconomics

Concerns regarding the impact of the project on property values, quality of life, tourism, and employment accounted for 12 percent of comments received.

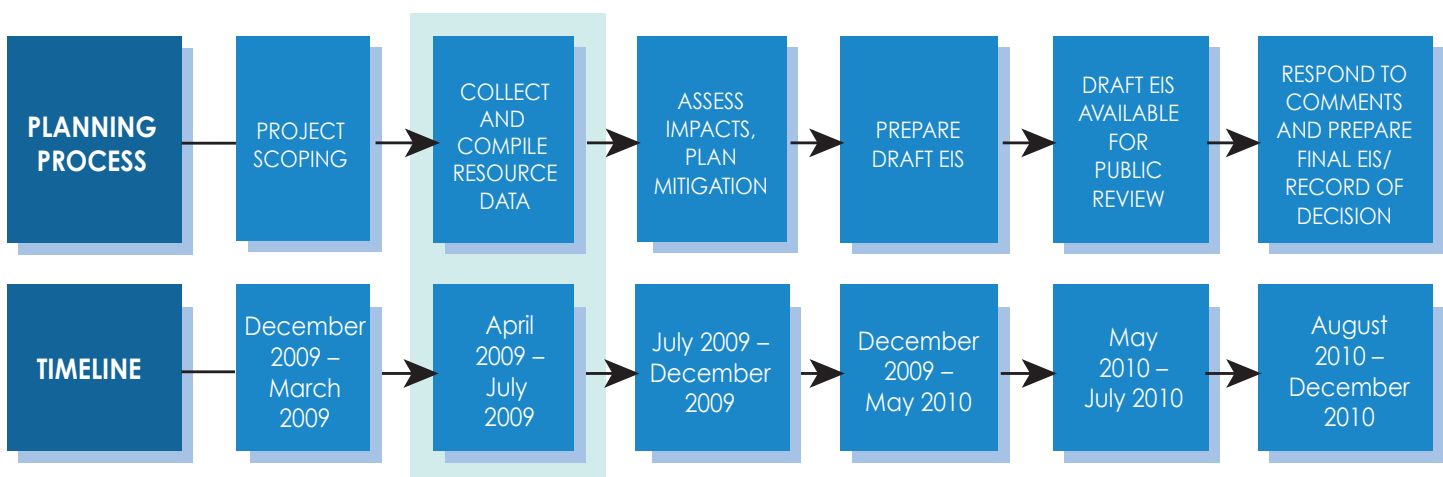
Project Alternatives

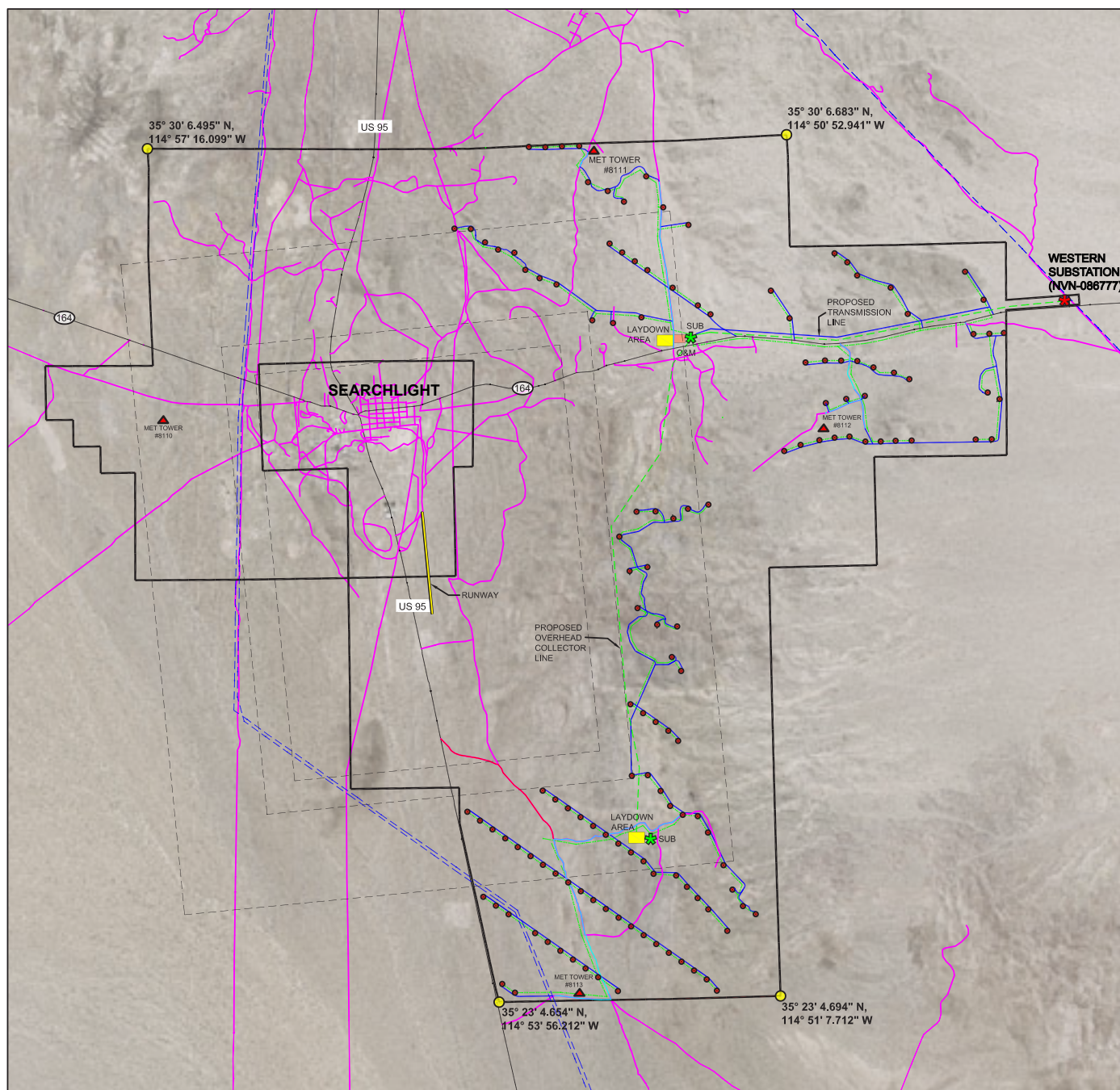
Eleven percent of comments received suggested using other sources of renewable energy or alternative placement of wind turbines in relation to homes, roads, or desert land.

Visual Resources

Concerns about impacts on visual resources occurred in 10 percent of total comments received. The majority of issues expressed in this category were related to how the placement of wind turbines might impact desert scenery and the overall look of the project area. Concerns about turbine lighting and flickering were also mentioned.

WE ARE HERE





LEGEND

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| ● SIEMENS 2.3 TURBINE | ✱ WESTERN SUBSTATION (NVN-086777) |
| — EXISTING ROAD | ■ O&M BUILDING (5 ACRES) |
| — PROPOSED WTG ROAD - 36' | ✱ SEARCHLIGHT WIND SUBSTATION |
| — UPGRADE EXISTING ROAD TO MIN 16' | ■ LAYDOWN AREA (10 ACRES) |
| — UPGRADE EXISTING ROAD TO 36' | ▲ MET TOWER |
| — PRELIMINARY ELECTRICAL COLLECTION LAYOUT | — SEARCHLIGHT AIRPORT RUNWAY |
| — PROJECT AREA BOUNDARY | |
| - - - EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE | |
| - - - OVERHEAD LINE | |
| — STATE OR FEDERAL HIGHWAY | |
| - - - FAA CATEGORY A, B, & C TRAFFIC PATTERN AIRSPACE | |

NOTES:

1. THE TURBINE LOCATIONS ARE ACCURATELY DISPLAYED BASED ON THEIR CURRENT UTM COORDINATES; HOWEVER, DUE TO MAP SCALE, THE OTHER FEATURES (ROADS, COLLECTION LINES, AND OVERHEAD LINES) ARE SHOWN SCHEMATICALLY. THEIR EXACT LOCATIONS CANNOT BE FIXED UNTIL TURBINES ARE MICRO-SITED ON HIGH QUALITY TOPOGRAPHIC MAPPING AND THE ROADS, COLLECTION LINES, AND OVERHEAD LINES ARE LOCATED AND DESIGNED TO MATCH TOPOGRAPHY AND FINAL LAYOUT.
2. COORDINATES DISPLAYED ARE UTM (METERS).

Site Layout Map

Searchlight Wind Energy Project

June 2009

0 2,000 4,000
SCALE IN FEET
HORIZONTAL DATUM IS UTM NAD83 ZONE 11
LAT/LONG COORDINATES ARE NAD 83





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WHAT'S NEXT?

The next step of the process is to document the results of the project studies in the Draft EIS (DEIS), which currently is expected to be available for public and agency review in mid-2010. During the review period, BLM will conduct public meetings to receive comments on the DEIS. The availability of the DEIS, along with detailed meeting information, will be announced in a future newsletter, on the website, and in local newspapers. At the end of the review period, all comments received will be compiled for review and analysis. Responses to those comments will be prepared and included in a Final EIS. After a minimum 30-day period, Records of Decision will be issued by BLM and Western.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

If you have questions, would like to be on the mailing list, or would like to speak to a project representative, **please visit our project website at http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en/fo/lvfo/blm_programs/energy.html or contact Greg Helseth, the BLM Project Manager for the Searchlight Wind Energy Project EIS, at searchlight_wind_energy_eis@blm.gov, 702.515.5000.**

For a glossary of frequently used energy terms, visit <http://www.eia.doe.gov/glossary/index.html>.